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## Higher Education Committee

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### HB 2345

**Brief Description:** Creating a higher education registration priority for eligible veterans and national guard members.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Angel, McCune, Schmick and Klippert.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires all public institutions of higher education in Washington to give priority registration to students who are veterans and National Guard members and who served in Afghanistan or Iraq after September 11, 2001.
- Permits institutions of higher education to give priority registration to a broader group of veterans and National Guard members.
- Encourages all private and independent institutions of higher education in Washington to give priority registration to students who are veterans and National Guard members and who served in Afghanistan or Iraq after September 11, 2001.
- Requires that this priority registration stay in place until July 1, 2022.

**Hearing Date:**

**Staff:** Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

**Background:**

According to the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, one in nine Washington residents is a veteran.

Institutions of higher education provide a variety of benefits for veterans and their families pursuing higher education. State law permits that within state-supported waiver authority, institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for:

- an eligible veteran or National Guard member;
- the child or spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who was totally disabled in the line of duty, or who is listed as missing in action or a prisoner of war; and

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- the surviving child or spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member killed in the line of duty. Upon remarriage, however, the surviving spouse no longer is eligible for a waiver.

Institutions of higher education also may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for a military or naval veteran who did not serve in active federal service abroad or in support of those serving abroad and who does not qualify as an eligible veteran or National Guard member.

In addition to tuition waivers, higher education institutions provide other benefits to veterans pursuing higher education. One example is the Vet Corps Navigator program funded by the federal program, AmeriCorps. The purpose of Vet Corps Navigators is to help veterans achieve their higher education goals. Navigators provide connections with federal, state, or local veterans benefits and financial aid programs and help them adjust to college life. There are Vet Corps Navigators stationed at 17 community and technical colleges, five public baccalaureate institutions, and Pacific Lutheran University.

**Summary of Bill:**

All public institutions of higher education in Washington are required to give priority registration to students who are veterans and National Guard members and who served in Afghanistan or Iraq after September 11, 2001. Institutions of higher education are permitted to give priority registration to a broader group of veterans and National Guard members.

All private and independent institutions of higher education in Washington are encouraged to give priority registration to students who are veterans and National Guard members and who served in Afghanistan or Iraq after September 11, 2001.

The provisions in the act expire on July 1, 2022.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested January 16, 2012.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.